

Substance Use—Fighting Back

Young adulthood. It's a time of growth, exploration and independence. For those in the age range of 18 to 26, this is the time when they begin to chart their own course. They may be away from parents for the first time, starting college, full-time work or new families, where they will make the choices that will shape their lives. This includes deciding whether to use alcohol or drugs.

The combination of newfound independence and the pressures of school or new careers can lead to risky behaviors. For example, research shows that people tend to drink the heaviest in their late teens and early to mid-20s. And the rates of illicit drug use are higher in young adults than in any other age group. You may know a young person who is having trouble with drinking or drug use, but keep in mind that help with prevention and recovery is available.

Your guidance and open communication is helpful to a young person who is independent, yet struggling with substance use. Although he or she may not approve of your concern at first, you can play a positive role in his or her recovery.

Warning Signs of Abuse

If you suspect that a young person may be using drugs or alcohol, look for these signs:

- Being more isolated, angry, nervous, moody or careless
- Having bloodshot eyes or widened pupils
- Showing poor judgment or risky, reckless behavior
- Showing changes in grooming habits and/or hygiene
- Missing money or valuables
- Losing interest in activities that were enjoyed before
- Suddenly dropping one group of friends for another
- Missing work or school and/or being late, often on Mondays
- Getting less work or study done, and having less ability to focus
- Wanting more privacy, avoiding eye contact

If the person you think might have a substance use problem is a co-worker, you may also notice that this person:

- Needs you and others to pick up part of the person's workload
- Asks co-workers to cover up for lateness
- Makes a lot of personal calls
- Always seems "tired"

Seeing these signs usually mean that he or she needs help.

Helpful Resources Support Recovery

Check out these resources that can help combat substance use.

- *The family physician*—can be a great resource. He or she may recommend a specialist.
- *Your FOH EAP* —offers information and community resources.
- *Find local treatment resources*— the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov/treatment.
- *Alcohol support groups for families and teens*— Alanon/Alateen: www.alanon.alateen.org; phone 1-888-4-alanon.
- *Drug support groups for families and friends*— Nar-Anon Family Groups: www.nar-anon.org.
- *General information about alcohol problems*—the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: www.niaaa.nih.gov.

Go online today! Log on to www.FOH4YOU.com to access *Substance Use and Young Adults* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section, and share this with your co-workers and family members.